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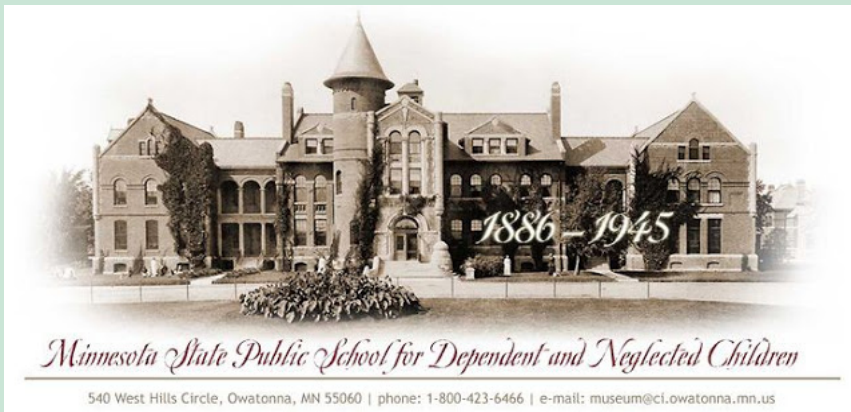
THURSDAY, AUGUST 10, 2017

Minnesota State Public School for Dependent and Neglected Children - The Owatonna State School

Erica Vetsch here:

Every tenth of the month, I have been posting about various historic sites in the state of Minnesota run by the Minnesota Historical Society...but today, I'm going to take a little departure. I'll still be blogging about an historic site. It will still be set in the state of Minnesota. The difference is...this isn't a site run by the Minnesota Historical Society.

Today, I'd like to tell you about one of the hidden gems of southern Minnesota, the MN State Public School for Dependent and Neglected Children.



From 1886 to 1945, the state of Minnesota operated an orphanage in the town of Owatonna, MN. In the nearly sixty years the orphanage was in operation, more than 10,000 children called the place 'Home.' At the height of occupancy, (In the Depression years of the 1930s) the institution averaged around five hundred children.

While many of the children were true orphans, many others were removed from abusive, neglectful situations. Every child who came to the school became a ward of the state of Minnesota, and parents had no rights once the child was removed from their care.

WINNERS!!!

JULY WINNERS!

Debbie Clatterbuck won a copy of *Bandolero* by Nancy J. Farrier.

Melanie Backus won *Secrets She Kept* by Cathy Gohlke. Given by Cindy Stewart

Patty Hamblin won Eva Marie Everson's book, *The One True Love of Alice Ann*.

Cindy W won a copy of Rags to Riches Romance Collection, given by Jennifer Uhlarik.

Andrea Stephens won a copy of My Heart Belongs on Mackinac Island by Carrie Fancett Pagels.

JUNE WINNERS!

Marilyn Ridgway won a copy of *Sword of the Matchmaker* by Debbie Lynne Costello

The winner of *Christmas at Stoney Creek* is Melanie Backus. Book donated by Martha Rogers

Lynda E. won a copy of *The Promise of Breeze Hill* by Pam Hillman

Connie Saunders won Anita Mae Draper's giveaway of The Secret Admirer Romance Collection

CONGRATULATIONS!

GIVEAWAY RULES

Winners will be notified by email and the winners name will be announced in the days comments. No one under 18 can enter our give aways. No purchase is necessary.



Upon arrival at the school, no matter what the child's age, they were placed in total isolation for three weeks. (After having their head shaved and being given a kerosene bath to kill whatever vermin might be making their abode on the child.) Once it was determined that the child had no communicable disease or mental instability that might prove harmful, they were placed into the nursery if they were under the age of four, or into one of the 'cottages.'

A cottage housed around thirty children at a time, all under the supervision of a house matron and two assistant matrons. It was luck of the draw whether you received a 'good' matron or a bad one. Siblings were separated according to age and gender, and they were allowed to see one another only on special occasions after that.

The orphanage, which was also a working farm for a good portion of the time it was open, boasted a school for children in 1-8th grade and a gymnasium with a swimming pool. Students from 9-12th grade attended Owatonna High School in town.

While the school tried to place children out for adoption as often as possible, most did not ever find a permanent home within a family. Older children were instead 'placed out,' which was a form of indenturing. In exchange for feeding, clothing, and housing a child (usually a teen-aged boy) and agreeing to send him to school for at least four months of the year, the host family received free labor.



More than 300 children died while wards of the state at the school, and 198 of those are buried at the school cemetery. In the early days, gravestones were placed to mark the name and pertinent dates of the child's life, but for whatever reason, beginning in the late 1920s or early 1930s, the school stopped placing headstones with the child's name and merely placed a concrete rectangle with the child's school ID number.

All winners have one week to claim their prize. USA shipping only. Offer void where prohibited. Odds of winning vary due to the number of entrants.

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- 2nd Amber Schamel
- 3rd Susanne Dietze
- 4th Pam Meyers
- 5th Anita Mae Draper
- 6th Kiersti Giron
- 7th Debbie Lynne Costello
- 9th Tiffany Amber Stockman
- 10th Erica Vetsch
- 11th Martha Rogers
- 12th Stephanie Grace Whitson
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- 14th Gabrielle Meyer
- 15th Joan Hochstetler
- 16th Pam Hillman
- 17th Cara Grandle
- 18th Nancy Farrier
- 19th Alanna Radle Rodriguez
- 20th Janalyn Voigt
- 21st Kathy Rouser
- 22nd Marilyn Turk
- 23th Susan Page Davis
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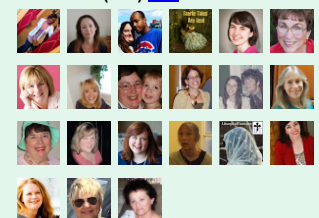
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When the school closed, the cemetery fell into ruin, and it wasn't until the 1990s that the children who were buried in this cemetery received the dignity of having their names remembered. Crosses were placed, engraved with each child's name.

If you have the chance, I urge you to visit the museum. One man, Harvey Ronglien, who was a "State School Kid" for eleven years in the 30s and 40s, is often at the museum to give tours and answer questions, but "State School" kids are passing from this life, and soon no one living will remember...



"To the children who rest here - May the love you lacked in life now be your reward in Heaven. You are remembered." Harvey Ronglien

There are several books written by "State School Kids" (This is what they proudly call themselves.) Two of the best I've read are "[The Boy From C-11](#)" by Harvey Ronglien, and "[While the Locust Slept](#)" by Peter Razor.

You can learn more about the Owatonna Orphanage at www.orphanagemuseum.com

In other news: My latest release is "Win, Place, or Show" in the Of Rags and Riches Novella Collection. You can find out more about Gard and Beryl's romance, and all the horses that help along the story [HERE](#).



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Posted by Erica Vetsch at 12:00 AM



Labels: Erica Vetsch, Minnesota Orphanage, Orphans and Orphanages, Owatonna State School

2 comments:



Marilyn R. August 10, 2017 at 6:54 AM

Interesting and informative post, even though a sad one. Orphanages are not as plentiful, but foster care placement for abused and neglected children today. Which at times can be more damaging (I've worked with foster care children and parents). Minnesota has a lot of hidden history to discover. Thank you, Erica.

Your new novella sounds wonderful as well as the complete collection in Of Rags and Riches.

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Connie R. August 10, 2017 at 11:48 AM

So sad!

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